

Indian Act

to be borne by that particular band. This must be recognized and dealt with as part of this legislation. I know that the Hon. Member for Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands has discussed many times over the past number of months the need for some type of review board which would assist the bands in obtaining proper funding and land settlements when there is extreme pressure brought to bear upon a particular band as a result of increased membership.

● (1550)

In addition, the fact that the appeal process does not cover residency rights is something which must be dealt with when the Bill goes to committee. Of course, the fact that there is no guarantee of services to off-reserve Indians is also something which ought to be addressed at that time.

I am pleased to play a small part in the debate this afternoon on this very historic day. I look forward to the Bill going to committee, and certainly I look forward to the third and final reading when discrimination on the basis of sex is removed from the Indian act once and for all.

Mr. Felix Holtmann (Selkirk-Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to address this Bill today. First, I would like to say that the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Crombie) has set a course, possibly unprecedented, and in six months has taken on an activity to return some fundamental feelings and activities which were lost during the many years of former administrations. I am extremely proud of the Minister and I have indicated to him that I will do everything I can to bring about the change which reflects the attitude of this Government. I am sure most Members of the House will do the same to give the Indians in the reserves the pride which in many cases they have lost.

I would like to address a few of the comments which were made today by opposition Members on the committee, whom I would also like to commend. It is the committee which will address the most important concern—the cost. No doubt when this Bill goes through the proper channels and into committee, people will ask what it will cost the Government. There have been some estimates from time to time which suggest that it might cost \$30 million, \$40 million, or that it might be in excess of \$200 million. However, no one has asked what the cost was to those people who have lost their status over the years. What has been the cost in suffering? Can we put a dollar value on those who could no longer be classified as status Indians, as opposed to their neighbours, and were not recipients of the benefits of that status? What was the cost to families who broke up or lost their status because they moved, or to those who married someone who was not a status Indian? Who could put a dollar value on that? I do not think it can be done. I do not think there is enough money to replace that.

I recognize that the Bill will not please everyone, because all of the wrongs cannot be undone. However, I think the Bill goes far in helping to make a previous wrong as right as possible. When this Bill is brought to committee, I know my colleagues and members of the Opposition who are on the committee will

suggest every possible way in which to ensure that we will go as far as we can in making it fair and that we will listen to as many people as possible who are affected.

Again, I would like to refer to the Minister in this regard. As my hon. colleague previously stated, the Minister has travelled and has worked as hard, if not harder, than any other Minister in this area. I am sure that if the Minister missed someone, it was not due to his attempt to accommodate everyone. However, my colleagues and I are helping the Minister in this regard. I think that is the bottom line. When this Bill is passed, we will know that we have done everything we could to consult with and listen to the people who are affected. I am very happy to be part of that process.

As a new Member of Parliament I find it exciting to be involved in such an important activity. I look forward in the next four years of this administration to many other dynamic changes which will be required, because the Bill will not restore economic needs and requirements, improve lower education or improve housing, which these people may need. The Bill does not address all of the issues, but it is a start.

Once again, I take my hat off to the Minister and commend all the speakers on this Bill who have given their support and advice. I look forward to debating this legislation further in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Mr. Crombie, seconded by Mr. Hnatyshyn, moves that Bill C-31, an Act to amend the Indian Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to, Bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It being four o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS— MOTIONS

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is there unanimous consent for the House to proceed to Item No. 40?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.